



children's home + aid
For the Love of Children
since 1883

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**Budgeting for Results Commission
Written Testimony**

Dear Commissioners:

As a statewide child and family serving agency in Illinois, Children's Home + Aid protecting abused and neglected children, providing early care and education to our youngest children, and providing a wide range of counseling and community services to more than 40,000 children, youth and families each year.

We have partnered with the State of Illinois for many decades, contracting with multiple state agencies, including: the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, the Illinois Department of Human Services, and the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority.

The efforts being undertaken in Illinois to align human service outcomes with budgeting and contracting decisions represents an important development for those Illinoisans served by our state's human services and the providers who partner with the state to provide these services. Several goals should be reflected in the Budgeting for Results Commission's coming report.

- Child welfare goals must include not only reunification of children in foster care wherever appropriate, but permanency through adoption or guardianship as well.
- It is also important to set goals to prevent foster care placement through intact family services to adequately meeting the child welfare needs of Illinois.
- Early childhood goals include preparing children to succeed in Kindergarten, setting a strong foundation for success in school and in life, while enabling parents to work or attend school to strengthen their family's economic self-sufficiency.
- Prevention programming must be a goal of the State of Illinois. Youth services, afterschool programming and youth violence prevention all increase positive outcomes for youth in school while reducing incarceration, homelessness and other costly negative outcomes.



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It is our view that there are important lessons to be learned from efforts already undertaken at the state level to align outcomes with budgeting and social service contracting, most notably at the Department of Children and Family Services where the largest service areas (foster care and residential care) are operating under performance-based contracts.

- Beginning in 1998, foster care services in Illinois have been delivered under the terms of an evolving performance contract. Services include case management and supports for children in substitute care being served by relatives and foster parents. This contracting strategy is credited with cutting foster care instability in half and increasing permanency for children three-fold, ultimately reducing the number of children in out-of-home care to 15,000 children from a peak of more than 50,000 children in 1997.
- Beginning in 2009, children served in residential treatment centers and group homes have been served under contracts emphasizing performance expectations in placement stability and moving children to less restrictive settings.

Each of these efforts built on an important set of common themes central to any effort to align outcomes, budgeting and contracting. Drawing from these themes, Children's Home + Aid would like to highlight several recommendations grounded in some of the most important lessons learned in these innovative performance-driven partnerships with the state:

- High quality data should drive the conversation. Understanding as much as possible about the gap between where system performance is now, and where that performance needs to be going forward is critical.
- Providers should be full partners in the conversation, reviewing data, sharing their perspective and the potential to innovate and change.
- There should be alignment between performance expectations and the resources invested in securing these outcomes. This means both a willingness move away from services and activities not producing desired results as well as new investments in specific resources designed to get improved outcomes.
- Providers should have access to rapid-time performance data which empowers management to regularly review performance results and make adjustments as necessary.

Children's Home + Aid stands ready to assist in working with the state to ensure a well-planned, and effective implementation of Budgeting for Results.

Sincerely,



Nancy B. Ronquillo
President & CEO